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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TOKYO 001479

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TAGS: [MARR](#) [MCAP](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [JA](#)
SUBJECT: DEFENSE MINISTER NUKAGA MEETS AMBASSADOR ON
REALIGNMENT

Classified By: AMB J. THOMAS SCHIEFFER for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Defense Minister Nukaga on the evening of March 17 made a pitch for a "two plus two" ministerial meeting after the base realignment initiatives are finalized, stressing that a "political statement" is necessary to gain public understanding of the realignment initiatives, particularly with respect to Japanese financing for the relocation of Marines to Guam. The Ambassador noted our reluctance to hold a 2 plus 2 unless the realignment package has been resolved. Nukaga also said he has been listening to local news on the Futenma Replacement Facility, (FRF) and hopes to find a solution soon. He stopped short of saying the Japanese government will agree to adjusting the current plan to meet local government concerns. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Ambassador Schieffer met with Defense Minister Nukaga the evening of March 17 at Nukaga's request. Nukaga began by saying he asked for the meeting to discuss the upcoming March 23-24 realignment talks, and noted that with respect to the Futenma Replacement Facility (FRF) the Japanese government is making utmost efforts to get local understanding. He said he has met informally with the Okinawa Governor and Nago Mayor and other local officials several times, and thinks we are now coming to a time to get a final solution to the issue. Nukaga said he, the Prime Minister, Foreign Minister Aso, and Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe share the same view on this, and he would like to persuade the Okinawa leaders based on this understanding.

¶3. (C) He then said that what he wants to ask is that we make utmost efforts to finalize the realignment initiatives, and that then, even if the time has to slip, we have a 2 plus 2 meeting, because it is necessary to issue a political statement to accompany the realignment initiatives. He cited the following rationale:

-- First, relative to the general public, it is useful to issue a political message for public understanding of the direction of the U.S.-Japan alliance in conjunction with our realignment initiatives.

-- Second, with respect to the realignment initiative to relocate Marines from Okinawa to Guam, Japanese financial

support is dependent on public understanding (as taxpayers). A political message is indispensable to get the understanding of the public.

-- Third is the relationship to the U.S.-Japan Summit meeting. Nukaga noted he had heard during his January trip to Washington that a Summit would be held in June or July. A political message at a 2 plus 2 would be quite useful leading to a Summit level meeting on the future of the U.S.-Japan alliance.

14. (C) Nukaga said this is his view as well as that of Foreign Minister Aso, so he would appreciate this message being conveyed to both the Department of Defense and the Department of State. Nukaga then emphasized that he is aiming for a political message AFTER finalizing of the realignment initiatives.

15. (C) Ambassador Schieffer responded that he would convey this to Washington. He explained to Nukaga that the reluctance Nukaga has heard comes from our feeling that we do not want to be portrayed as the villain to Okinawa. The relationship has matured to the point that the old message "the U.S. made us do it" doesn't work any more. The only way the relationship will work in the future is if both sides take ownership, and both sides say this is what we have agreed to do.

16. (C) The Ambassador continued that with respect to FRF, while we have shown flexibility, our position has been portrayed to Okinawa as if it is the U.S. that is unwilling to show flexibility, and that's not right. If there is a possibility Okinawa could be won over by a small alteration

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to the plan, of only 200 or more yards or so, we don't see why that's a bad thing to do. In the end, we understand that the Japanese government must make the decision. But if the Japanese government makes the decision that there will be no change, then the Japanese government must take responsibility for that.

17. (C) Nukaga responded that the GOJ and he himself will take responsibility for resolving the issue. The FRF is not a bilateral issue, but a domestic one, he said. Of course realignment is a bilateral matter, but FRF to Camp Schwab must be resolved domestically. That's why the Japanese government and he himself will resolve it. Nukaga added that there is no intent to make the U.S. the villain to Okinawa. He asked the Ambassador to please let Washington know this message, to make the schedule after finalization of the realignment initiatives go as smoothly as possible.

18. (C) Nukaga then said JDA Administrative Vice Minister Moriya also is willing to visit Washington in the near future. It would be difficult this month, but after finalizing the realignment initiatives, or perhaps when finalizing the political statement to be issued, Moriya could travel to Washington. Nukaga said it is difficult to travel himself because the Diet is in session, but he could get Diet authorization to travel to Washington soon after the realignment initiatives are finalized. What is necessary, he said, is that after the initiatives are finalized, special legislative authority by the Diet will be needed to get financial support for the relocation of Marines to Guam, so the understanding of the general public, the taxpayers, is required.

19. (C) The Ambassador then asked Nukaga -- noting he was not negotiating but only asking for his own understanding -- why JDA would not want to move the FRF runway 200 or so yards down the peninsula if this would satisfy the Mayor and the Governor. Why is it so important not to move the planned runway? Nukaga responded that if the runway is moved 200 to 300 meters, then the facility will be mostly in the ocean. The former SACO plan was entirely in the ocean. There were

many protesters who obstructed construction, and this is one reason the former plan could not proceed. So, he said, it is important to start construction from the land.

¶10. (C) At the Ambassador's request, Pol-Mil Director then explained that even with a move of 200-300 meters towards the ocean, the construction still could begin from land. He also pointed out that even with the current plan, much of the FRF will be landfill in the ocean, so the difference in the amount of landfill between the current and a revised plan is not significant.

¶11. (C) Nukaga again emphasized that he will take responsibility to resolve the issue. Please watch what happens, he said. I have been meeting with the local politicians many times, listening to their views and explaining Japanese government views, so I hope to find a solution. The Ambassador asked Nukaga if he is telling us this means there might be an opportunity for a small change to the plan. Nukaga responded by saying there were some false reports in the Japanese press today, such as the Sankei Shimbun article, which complicate negotiations with the local communities. I'm following the characteristic Japanese way of negotiating, he said, so I would like to explain after we are successful.

¶12. (C) The Ambassador ended by stating he has some negotiating experience himself, and is well aware there can only be one negotiator, and one needs to have faith in that negotiator. "So I have great faith that you can resolve this issue", he told Nukaga.
SCHIEFFER